

GROWTH OF GERMAN INFLUENCE

Orient Verein founded in 1934 soon after the Nazi advent to power. The Verein published the widely circulated *Orient Nachrichten*. In the Iranian sector it was valiantly seconded by the Deutsch-Persische Gesellschaft, which sponsored various publications, organized lecture tours, and generally facilitated cultural exchanges between the two countries. At the same time a number of periodicals such as the *Zeitschrift für Politik*, the *Koloniale Rundschau*, and *Der Neue Orient* devoted their columns to Eastern problems arousing the interest of experts and laymen alike.

With the establishment of the Nazi regime the curricula of German universities likewise were enriched by a greater number of courses devoted to the East and colonial questions. In 1933 the number of such courses was 196; by 1936 it reached the figure 341, of which 24 dealt with the problem of *Deutschtum* outside Europe. In 1935 alone 41 theses were written on colonial topics.¹²

Apart from stimulating interest in Eastern affairs within Germany (two thousand conversions to Islam were registered in Berlin in 1938), the Nazi government became intensely active in dispensing propaganda proclaiming its role and achievements in the East. This propaganda stressed that, politically, German's intentions were pure, that, in contrast to other powers, Germany had no imperialistic designs in the Middle East. The Nazi political system was asserted to be superior to others, as one that did not produce the class struggle because of its excellent social balance. It was pointed out that a similarity existed between the German awakening under the impact of National Socialism and the awakening of the East. Aware of Eastern respect for authority, German propagandists

underlined the beneficial role of the *Fuhrerprinzip* and drew analogies among Hitler, Reza Shah, Kemal Ataturk, and Ibn Saud. They described them as forceful and God-sent leaders. The *Hitlerjugend* was cited as an example of youth's enthusiasm for national revival. Accordingly, similar youth organizations were encouraged in the Middle East. With all that, care was taken to impress the Orientals with the military might of resurgent Germany. A weak Germany would not find sympathy among Eastern nations; a strong one was sure to enlist a number of friends. During the Nazi period Berlin became more than

12 Bernard Vernier, *La Politique islamique de l'Allemagne* (Paris, 1939), p. 27.